

Maker Mondays

Welcome to the 16th installment of Maker Mondays. During July and August, we will be posting these activities twice a month. Check your social media feed or look for an email from us on Monday, August 17th for the next fun activity that you can do at home, inspired by history and the Historic Deerfield collections, using common household items.

Corn Husk Dolls



This Monday, we are going to show you how to make dolls using corn husks. Popularly known as “Corn Husk Dolls,” we are presenting our own adaptation of a traditional Native American craft. Corn husk dolls have been, and are still, crafted world-wide by just about every culture that grows corn. Figures made from the husks of corn, have an ancient history in the Americas, where native populations made corn dolls for their children. As European Colonists learned about the great value of corn and how to cultivate it, they also learned how to make corn husk dolls for their

children. In Historic Deerfield's History Workshop, visitors of all ages have enjoyed using corn husks to make dolls and hearing about the importance of corn in the life of Native people and early Deerfield settlers.

We have offered this activity in late summer, when sweet corn becomes available in most parts of the United States. So, whether you are reading this in a rural area where you grow your own corn or in a city where you go to farmers' markets or grocery stores, we are quite sure you can find sweet corn in its green husks. When you "shuck" (peel) the corn to prepare it for eating, you will need to save the husks and spread them out in the sun to dry. In sunny, hot weather this will take two or three days. We suggest flattening them on a tray so they will lie flat and turning them over several times so both sides of the husk get equally dry. When the husks have become light tan and are crisp to the touch, you are ready to start making your doll. An alternative to shucking and drying the corn husks is to purchase husks dried and packaged for making corn tamales. These can be found in the international aisle of your grocery store or in a specialty market.





Here are the supplies you will need:

Dry corn husks, about 7 or 8

Large bowl or flat pan of hot water

Towel

Scissors

Twine

Optional: yarn, cloth, wool, quick-drying craft glue

Begin by soaking the dry corn husks in hot water for 10 minutes or until they become soft and pliable.





Step 1: Choose three of the largest husks, press them dry on the towel and align them so the pointy ends are facing the same direction.

Step 2: Tie the pointy ends tightly together.

Step 3: Turn the bundle upside down and pull each husk over the tied string. In this way you are creating the doll's head.

Step 4: Now, you will need to tie another piece of twine around the husks to make a neck. Your doll should now have a head and a neck.

Step 5: Go back to your water-softened husks and choose a smaller, narrow husk to make your dolls arms. Roll the husk into a tube and tie it at each end to make the dolls hands.

Step 6: Put the arms between the long husks below the head, and tie the husks tightly under the arms. This knot will hold the arms in place and make the doll's waist. Your doll should now have a head and a body with arms. If you want your doll to have a skirt, trim the bottom of the husks to make them even.

Step 7: If you want your doll to have legs, cut the bottom husks in half, splitting them so they form two legs. Tie each leg with twine to hold it together.

Step 8: You have now finished your basic doll shape. You can add hair made from the corn silk, yarn, or wool. You can give the doll clothing made from smaller pieces of corn husk or cloth. A hat or a hood can be made from corn husks or the shell of a nut. You can be very creative and give your doll any kind of personality you choose. You might want to add tools, a basket or even a broom!

Be creative and have fun, we would love to see your finished corn husk doll. Take a photo and send it to us at: historicdeerfield@historic-deerfield.org

